

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L JOHANNESBURG 0837

USIAC FOR IAA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OEXC
SUBJECT: IV GRANTEE DON MATTERA

1. DON MATTERA, COLORED POET AND JOHANNESBURG IV NOMINEE, TOLD
USIS OFFICER HE IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO BE CONVICTED ON CHARGES
OF CONTRAVENING HIS BANNING ORDERS, WHICH CARRIES MAXIMUM FIVE-
YEAR PRISON SENTENCE.

2. MATTERA WAS PICKED UP AT HIS HOME FEBRUARY 19 AND RELEASED
FEBRUARY 21 ON R400 BAIL, PAID BY THE JOHANNESBURG STAR, WHERE
THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALLOWED HIM TO WORK AS A COPY EDITOR DURING
THE PERIOD OF HIS BANNING ORDER (1973-1978). HE SAID HE WAS
NOT PHYSICALLY HARMED BY POLICE, BUT AT ONE POINT WAS TAKEN
AROUND TO SEVERAL POLICE STATIONS AND RIDICULED BY POLICE
OFFICERS. HE WAS GRILLED FOR LONG HOURS BUT WAS ALLOWED SLEEP.

3. MATTERA'S TRAIL IS SET FOR APRIL 6 OR 7. HE IS CHARGED
ON FIVE COUNTS OF CONTRAVENING HIS BANNING ORDER. HE BELIEVES
THREE OF THE COUNTS ARE TRUMPED UP AND WILL BE DISMISSED, BUT
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THERE IS A "STRONG CHANCE" THE OTHER TWO COUNTS WILL STICK.
THE TWO CHARGES ARE RELATED TO MEETINGS HE ATTENDED TO HELP SET
UP A SPORTS ORGANIZATION FOR POOR BLACK AND COLORED CHILDREN
IN TOWNSHIPS AROUND JOHANNESBURG. MATTERA SAID THE GOVERNMENT
ORIGINALLY HAD 13 WITNESSES TO TESTIFY THAT HE ATTENDED MEETINGS,
BUT FIVE OF THESE HAVE ALREADY SKIPPED THE COUNTRY.

4. MATTERA'S FIVE-YEAR BANNING ORDER IS DUE TO EXPIRE IN AUGUST 1978. THE ORDERS PROHIBIT ANY SOCIAL GATHERING "AT WHICH THE PERSONS PRESENT ALSO HAVE SOCIAL INTERCOURSE WITH ONE ANOTHER," ANY POLITICAL GATHERING AT WHICH ANY PRINCIPLE OR POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT "IS PROPAGATED, DEFENDED, ATTACKED, CRITICIZED OR DISCUSSED," OR ANY "GATHERING OF PUPILS OR STUDENTS ASSEMBLED FOR THE PURPOSE OF BEING INSTRUCTED, TRAINED OR ADDRESSED" BY MATTERA. HE IS ALSO PROHIBITED FROM WRITING OR BEING QUOTED.

5. MATTERA HAS NEVER BEEN TOO CAREFUL ABOUT OBSERVING THE BANNING ORDERS. HE HAS CONTINUED TO PUBLISH POETRY OUTSIDE SOUTH AFRICA UNDER HIS OWN NAME, AND WITHIN SOUTH AFRICA UNDER AN ASSUMED NAME (SOME OF THESE POEMS HAVE BEEN BANNED). HE HAS ATTENDED BOTH POLITICAL AND SOCIAL GATHERINGS, INCLUDING A NUMBER OF FUNCTIONS AT USIS. FOR EXAMPLE, HE SHOWED UP AT A USIS GATHERING OF ABOUT 200 PEOPLE INVITED TO MEET AMBASSADOR YOUNG ON MAY 22, 1977. USIS TRIED TO PROTECT HIM BY KEEPING HIM IN A SEPARATE ROOM, BUT HE SEEMED UNCONCERNED AND MET WITH YOUNG (WHOM HE KNOWS FAIRLY WELL) AND ABOUT FIVE OTHER PEOPLE IN A PRIVATE USIS OFFICE WHERE PICTURES WERE TAKEN.

6. NONE OF THE CHARGES MENTION USIS INVOLVEMENT. WHEN POLICE ARRESTED HIM, HOWEVER, THEY CONFISCATED A PICTURE TAKEN AT HOME OF ABPAO HAHN, SHOWING MATTERA, HAHN, FANYANA MAZIBUKO (SOWETO TEACHER AND ACTIVIST DETAINED SINCE OCTOBER 19) AND VISITING POET MICHAEL HARPER.
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7. MATTERA HAS COLORFUL REPUTATION. HE WAS WELL-KNOWN AND MUCH-FEARED GANGSTER UNTIL HE GOT RELIGION AND IS NOW DEVOUT MUSLIM. HE WAS POLITICALLY ACTIVE FOR BLACK AND COLORED CAUSES, INCLUDING MEMBERSHIP IN BPC, UNTIL BANNING ORDERS SERVED. HE NOW SPENDS MUCH OF HIS FREE TIME TRYING TO HELP YOUTHS IN SAME KIND OF GHETTO HE CAME FROM. HE AND HIS WIFE, THOUGH SUPPORTING SEVEN CHILDREN, RECENTLY ADOPTED AN ORPHAN. (WIFE, INCIDENTALLY, WAS FIRED FROM HER COMPUTER JOB WITH AN AFRIKANER FIRM TWO DAYS AFTER MATTERA WAS ARRESTED.)

8. MATTERA HAS HIRED AN AFRIKANER LAWYER, E. JOUBERT, WHO GOT HIM OFF NINE PREVIOUS CHARGES WHEN HE FOUGHT HIS WAY THROUGH THREE POLICEMEN TO RELEASE SOME OF HIS FRIENDS IN A PADDY WAGON. THE LAWYER MAY BE ABLE TO WORK ANOTHER MIRACLE THIS TIME, BUT MATTERA IS EXTREMELY DOUBTFUL. WHATEVER HAPPENS, IT IS SURE BET MATTERA WON'T BE GIVEN A PASSPORT OR TAKING UP AN IV GRANT ANY TIME SOON.

9. NOTE: COPIES OF MATTERA'S BANNING ORDERS, ARREST CHARGES, AND AFFIDAVIT FROM MATTERA BEING POUCHED AF/S. SINCE ARTHUR ASHE IS FRIEND OF MATTERA'S, DEPARTMENT MAY WISH INFORM

ASHE OF CASE AFTER IT BECOMES PUBLIC.
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